

# Montgomery County Council

**For Immediate Release**

**March 1, 2005**

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## **COUNCIL CONSIDERS ICC ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT, URGES STATE TO MOVE AHEAD ON NEEDED ROADWAY**

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The Montgomery County Council today voted to “green-light” the long-delayed InterCounty Connector (ICC) highway that would link I-270 with I-95 and provide a desperately-needed east-west traffic link by building the 18-mile road along the County’s Master Plan route.

The 6 to 3 vote came after a lengthy and detailed examination of the state of Maryland’s Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Voting in favor of recommending construction of the ICC were Councilmembers Nancy Floreen, Michael Subin, Howard Denis, Steve Silverman, George Leventhal, and Michael Knapp. Opposing the road were Councilmembers Phil Andrews, Marilyn Praisner, and Tom Perez.

“The ICC is part of a needed package of transportation improvements that are all designed to relieve the traffic congestion that is seriously eroding our quality of life in the County,” said Councilmember Floreen, who chairs the Council’s Transportation & Environment Committee. “It will help folks get from Gaithersburg to BWI Airport and Baltimore. It will take traffic off local roads. It just makes good sense.”

“This road should have been built long ago and because we didn’t build it then, it’s more expensive now,” said Councilmember Michael Knapp. “We need the ICC to dig ourselves out of the traffic congestion hole that 40 years of delay have caused.”

The Council strongly urged the State to keep a proposed bikeway paralleling the ICC. The Council also recommended that the ICC route bypass the Cashell Estates neighborhood in Derwood, sparing 16 homes, and also deleted proposed ramps to Old Columbia Pike in Fairland, which would take seven homes. # # #

March 1, 2005

Neil J. Pedersen, Administrator  
Maryland State Highway Administration  
707 North Calvert Street  
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

Dear Mr. Pedersen:

The Montgomery County Council appreciates this opportunity to submit our statement on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Intercounty Connector Study. We have reviewed the DEIS and make the following recommendations and comments:

1. ***We support Corridor 1 as the preferred alternate.*** The segment west of Northwest Branch has been assumed in County master plans for more than 30 years; the segment east of Northwest Branch has been in these plans for more than 50 years. For over 15 years, all comprehensive master plans for the eastern part of Montgomery County have been premised on the ICC being constructed along the Master Plan alignment. An enormous number of the County's zoning decisions could be called into question under Maryland's "change or mistake" rule if the road is not built on the expected alignment. Selecting Corridor 2 would cause major disruption to communities that, for more than a half-century, have existed under the expectation that the ICC would go elsewhere, not through their midst. Most of those who do not support this project agree that if it is to be built, it should be built on the master plan alignment.

Corridor 1 best meets the needs of the traveling public, both by providing better accessibility for east-west travel and by reducing future congestion in the Mid-County. On the other hand, the underpinnings of every master plan in the central and eastern portion of Montgomery County would be severely compromised by selecting Corridor 2. As the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission emphasized at its February 23 press conference, regional water quality would be severely compromised with the Corridor 2. In addition, community and several important historic resources would be negatively impacted or destroyed entirely if Corridor 2 were chosen. In short, we do not believe that Corridor 2 to be a prudent, fair, or feasible alternative to Corridor 1.

2. ***In the vicinity of Rock Creek we support Option A.*** While Option C might better protect the environmental resources along the Mill Creek tributary, the issue of fairness is once again called into question. The community of Cashell Estates would be decimated by this option. Option A has been the accepted route for decades. It would require the taking of 3 houses, 2 of which are already owned by SHA. However, this recently proposed recommendation, which

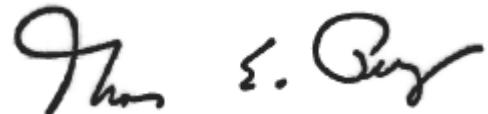
would run through a well-established community, could require the taking of as many as 19 homes and 1 business. None of the residents expected this intrusion as they purchased homes and shaped their community. In addition, Option C adds significantly to the cost of the project and creates far more residential noise impacts than Option A. ***Furthermore, MDOT should immediately undertake a project planning study to determine how to connect the ICC to Midcounty Highway at Shady Grove Road.***

1. ***We support construction of a grade separated interchange at Layhill Road (MD 182).*** The relatively small additional expense will allow for better use of the ICC by Mid-County residents and provide a much-improved connection between two State highways. The estimated use of this interchange by approximately 30,000 vehicles per day supports its purpose and need. ***The toll between the Layhill Road and Georgia Avenue interchanges should be very small—or free—so as not to encourage drivers to cut through Longmead Crossing for a cheaper toll.***
2. ***We support Option A through Northwest Branch Park.*** Option A will have much less of an impact on the environmental resources in the park. Option A will need shorter bridge connections, will be less expensive, and will have less impact on the Northwest Branch-Bonifant Floodplain Ecologically Sensitive Area.
3. ***We defer to Prince George's County as to whether the eastern terminus of the ICC is at I-95 or US 1.***
4. ***We oppose the construction of a partial interchange between the ICC and Old Columbia Pike.*** These ramps, which are inconsistent with our master plan for that area, would require the taking of several homes and would introduce regional and increased commercial traffic onto a residential street.
5. ***We support the construction of a partial interchange between the ICC and Briggs Chaney Road.*** Although these ramps were not included in our master plan, they would provide the access from the ICC that cannot be provided directly at US 29.
6. ***We support construction of a 10'-wide shared use path in the ICC right-of-way from Prince George's County to its junction with the right-of-way of M-83 Alternate A. At that point it should follow the M-83 Alternate A alignment west to Needwood Road, and then along Needwood Road to the County-programmed shared use path at Redland Road.*** The ICC right-of-way is a valuable public resource; this project should include a multi-modal approach which would be maximized by the highway, transit service (the bus service proposed in the DEIS), and the shared use path.
7. ***We support the four specific design changes proposed by the Montgomery County Planning Board: (1) improve the stream crossings at tributaries of Mill Creek and the North Branch of Rock Creek; (2) reduce forest loss in parklands by building linear stormwater management and retaining walls or reinforced side slopes; (3) work with individual property owners to determine whether building retaining walls, where feasible, would result in a more desirable outcome; and (4) preserve the right-of-way for the Georgia Avenue Busway.***

1. ***We support evaluating the prohibition of heavy trucks on the ICC.*** This option should be studied comprehensively early in the design phase. The study should examine whether this prohibition should apply only to a segment of the ICC, particularly the segment between I-370 and US 29.
2. ***We support adding the dredging of Lake Needwood as an Environmental Stewardship measure.***

The ICC is a critical road project whose need is well documented. The Council supports its construction, and we will continue to follow its progress along with SHA and Prince George's County officials and staff as they work to complete the next phase of project development for the ICC. We look forward to the Federal Highway Administration issuing a Record of Decision on this project later this year.

Sincerely,



Thomas E. Perez  
Council President

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Copies: The Honorable Robert L. Ehrlich, Governor, State of Maryland  
The Honorable Paul Sarbanes, United States Senate  
The Honorable Barbara Mikulski, United States Senate  
The Honorable Christopher Van Hollen, U.S. House of Representatives  
The Honorable Albert Wynn, U.S. House of Representatives  
The Honorable Ida Ruben, Chair, Montgomery County Senate Delegation  
The Honorable Charles Barkley, Chair, Montgomery County House Delegation  
The Honorable Gloria Lawlah, Chair, Prince George's County Senate Delegation  
The Honorable Carolyn J. B. Howard, Chair, Prince George's County House Delegation  
The Honorable Douglas Duncan, Montgomery County Executive  
The Honorable Jack Johnson, Prince George's County Executive  
The Honorable Samuel H. Dean, Chair, Prince George's County Council  
Robert L. Flanagan, Secretary, Maryland Department of Transportation  
Nelson J. Castellanos, Maryland Division Administrator, Federal Highway Administration  
Derick Berlage, Chair, Montgomery County Planning Board